Everything you need to know from those who have been there

Flinders University student panel

Part 2 (of 2)

When you’re looking at that kind of stuff Tara, did you find that was easy to actually contact an academic? And how, what type of advice you would give on that cause, what type of questions did you ask them?

Yeah, that’s the other thing is that I, I don’t know why, I thought I was going to have to like physically go see the person or have a phone interview or something and I was really stressed out about it, but you can just send an email, obviously using formal language like dear, you know so and so, and yours sincerely so and so, and, but just make sure you just don’t send a question like can you tell me about anxiety? Like, don’t make it too broad because then they don’t know what to do with that, so I sent a couple of like key questions, like maybe bout three to five to each person I would send, I would send a couple of key question that I wanted answered, like how does anxiety impact concentration within the school, or something like that, but just make sure you direct the academic or the expert in the direction you kind of need to go, so that they, otherwise they will just get overwhelmed and won’t be able to answer the broad question.

Did you have any experience with that as well Laura?

Well, firstly finding Google Scholar was like my life, and I still use it today. If I hadn’t done Research Project in Year 12, I wouldn’t of gotten Google Scholar, and I just wouldn’t of worked it out and I would have struggled so much at uni, so I think that’s what the purpose of Research Project is, I think the uni people said to the high school people, these people, the kids need to know how to use Google Scholar and how to get scholar, scholarly articles, I can’t say that word, and when it came, comes to getting primary resources, I’ve already told you how I didn’t hear anything back, but there are ways around that too, sometimes for each topic you might not actually need a primary resource, no you need the, but you don’t need it from an academic or something, you can get it in other ways, so my primary resources where mostly, I did actually go to a zoo and I talked to zoo keepers and stuff, but like, just surveys too, it’s very popular in Year 12 to run a survey monkey survey to your friends, I enticed my people to fill it out with candy canes so I could actually get responses rather than like only 11 out of the 30 I sent or something. Yeah, so that’s pretty much my….

So you’ve mentioned things like Google Scholar and talking with academics and that, did any of you actually go to any of the universities and use any of our actual resources, physically go there?

No, I didn’t know it existed! I had no idea, and if I did know I probably would of had a much better time.

Yes, so you can actually sign up to be, become basically a member of the Flinders library, so you get given your own card with your own, you know, good looking photo on there, and like you can go in and hire, like borrow the books, but then you can also, if you go on campus , you can actually go onto a computer and access all live databases and it’s really easy to use, you can type in your key area, and all the results that come up, like, it’s not like you just do a Google search and you get some Wikipedia page or something, you’re going to get good quality stuff, that you know your teachers will love that you’ve actually really got good quality things like that, and then you can just save the PDFs to your USB and then use it when you need.

Just one point about databases, which I only actually learnt last week or something in a lecture, I was so dead scared of database in school, like I hated using them, the librarian always told me to use them and I never did, I stuck to my Google, I stuck to what I knew, and now that I am at university obviously I’m doing a lot of research topics myself and have to conduct research via database cause it’s what required, and the lecturer told me the other day, that a lot of the, the good information, so they talk about peer-reviewed sources, which is basically where an academic resources are accredited by other individuals as being like a decent source, and so a lot peer-reviewed articles appear on things like Google Scholar and databases, but you can’t actually, because they’re sorted of accredited and exist specifically with these databases, you can’t find them via a Google search. So really what that means is what you’re going to get on Google is never going to be the top, the top quality stuff, so to actually access the top range information to sort of get the best that you can for your Research Project , you’re going need to take a step out of your comfort zone a little bit, sign up to the Flinders library, ask an expert or find some more specific sources through your schools or through Google Scholar, so I think that’s really important to know.

So I think some advice, I guess if you are taking away something from each of that is to research quite widely, so, use things like scholarly articles, access, start talking to people, use surveys and use a range of those different things, so you can bring different sources from other areas and you get different points of views as well.

I’m conscious about time, so, I know what we are looking at the moment, but with all of that in mind and now looking back at your project, and where you are at at the moment, cause each of you are in a different course, and each come from different schools, while it might seem quite a different project at the time, how do you find it has actually helped you now, now that you are at uni, or in other subjects at school, or anything like that?

So for me, I spent all of Year 12 not knowing what degree I wanted to do at university, I knew that from my experience that I wanted to help kids achieve, children who don’t receive an education like we all have, I wanted to help them receive that education, but I didn’t know whether I wanted to do that via law or doing an education degree and being a teacher. And I think through doing Research Project and learning about policy but then also learning about the importance of teachers, and student teacher relationships, that really helped me confirm the fact that I wanted to be a teacher in my heart, despite what ATAR was or whatever. Yes, so, doing the Research Project actually helped me confirmed where I wanted to go with my life, so if you’re really interested in something specifically if it’s about a degree or a career path, I really encourage you to do that.

My main thing was that I think Research Project really encourages self-directed learning, so that, which is obviously a big thing at university, so it’s kind of like a good transition step, so it’s getting you used to doing something that is in your area of passion and then guiding that research yourself, so, which is often what university really is, and then it also just really helps like Laura was saying about if some people don’t reply it can be a challenge but it’s, in Research Project you really learn to identify challenges, but then you still document that and then talk about how you overcame that, so that’s a really good point to, you can like reflect on your own learning which is really a great tool to then have when you go to university.

So the Research Project taught me time management, the Research Project is a massive project, it goes for a long time and if you’re not organised and if you don’t structure well, you won’t do very well. I have found through my various friends and stuff, so and then when you go to uni it’s a lot more flexible, there is no teachers to be like, get this draft done, do this, there is nothing like that and the Research Project taught me to be organised and how to plan a research essay, and that’s exactly what we do at uni all the time, like for each class we do a research essay each semester, so it kind of becomes the norm and you know the Research Project might seem so massive and stuff but honestly I’m telling you soon it will be just the normal.

And before we open it up to any questions anyone might have, did you want to leave with maybe one, each of you I guess, from your own experience, what will probably be the one thing that you wish you did get told at the time, when you were doing it?

I would say the main thing would be that like, you probably hear all the time, but quality is a lot more important than quantity, so you know how you out of, you may do heaps of research, but you pick your best 10 pages to send and get marked by SACE, so basically they’re not going to see that you have done say 80 pages or something like that, they’re going to look at the quality of it. So I think at the start that I was going crazy just wanting to get heaps, heaps and heaps of sources, but they were really badly like annotated and reflected on, so I think even if like you’ve got not many sources, it’s just about how you deal with that information, how you reflect on it, which is really important and it’s going to get you the good grade that you would like.

Gosh, for me I think it was to not slack off, at the start of the Research Project, especially because I did it in Year 12, myself and a lot of my friends, we all saw the Research Project lesson, like the designated time three times a week, whatever, it’s just like study period, it’s like great Research Project, I’ll get my English assignment done, and then you get, you know, a term through and you’re like, oh my god, like I’ve got to complete X Y Z, you know, in three weeks, so it’s about yes, self-directed learning, being focused, having a timeline and really sticking to that because otherwise, I’m telling you guys, regardless of whether you are in Year 10, 11 and 12, school goes really really quickly, and your terms just fly by, so you need to be on the game.

So I really wished that I was told, I mean I was told, but I really wish I listen to my Research Project teacher, and engaged with her a lot more, I only engaged with her once my question starting falling to rubbish and no one was responding to me, and I was just having such a bad time. If I had engaged with her more at the beginning I would have probably had a better quality question to follow through with the rest of the project and it would have been easier on my life.

While we’ve got these three up here, does anyone in the group actually want to ask any questions while there here? That could be about them getting started, it can be about stuff they’ve done, it could be about their particular projects or anything at all? Or any of us? There is a microphone around that can help with that.

And if not, that’s ok. If you have not been, had a chance to come and actually have a chat with us today, make sure you do come by, grab the handout tips that we’ve got, that’s going to be useful when you’re getting started. It got some different pages you can have a look at, it has got things like what you’ve heard Tara, what you’ve heard Emily, what you’ve heard Laura mention about using the library so will be able to sign up for that for free as Year 11 or 12 students, use extra resources that you don’t have at school so you can access the big four storey library that they’ve got there, you can come on campus, use their databases, you can look on the expert page, and look if there is particular people in the fields you might be interested in, actually access the type of information and get all of this now to make it easier for when you are going forward through that.

So, while we are all here I want to say thank you for coming in again and for listening and for, thank you Emily, Tara and Laura.